



“PRIZE” SHORT STORIES OF JOSEPH P. SHERMAN

Contained here are four “Prize Short Stories” written by my grandfather Joseph Patrick Sherman, originally hailing from Monaghan County, Ireland; when he was police officer, 18th Precinct, for the New York City Police Department. These police officer tales appeared, in a period spanning from December 1938 to April 1940, in issues of *Spring 3100*, a monthly magazine put out by the department.

Wm. Thomas Sherman

1604 NW 70th St.

Seattle, Washington 98117

206-784-1132

wts@gunjones.com

<http://www.gunjones.com> and http://www.scribd.com/wsherman_1

Spring 3100

December 1938



Christmas Dinner

By

Patrolman

Joseph P. Sherman

18th Precinct



PRIZE SHORT STORY

Her gaze remained fixed as Bob receded from view . . .

BOB MAHONEY was a rookie. There was no doubt about that. You did not have to read Special Orders No. 280 to know it was his first day on solo patrol in his new uniform. Watching him strut by, self-consciously peering at his reflection in the store windows, you would, even if only a casual observer, have become aware of this.

Bob was proud of his new outfit—and why shouldn't he be? Hadn't he waited six long years for the coveted appointment that called for wearing the blue? And what a period that six years had been for Bob! It was such that had he been made of less sterner stuff, he would have fallen by the wayside. Despondency and despair were his constant companions and there were times when he resisted the siren call of "easy" money only by a superhuman effort of his will. But of such stuff was our hero made that he emerged victorious—a life-long ambition at last realized. He was now a member of "The Finest."

Bob always was proud of his personal appearance and truly not without just reason. He was tall, erect and clean cut and when arrayed in his new summer uniform he presented a picture that would have melted the heart of the most exacting martinet. Was it any wonder then that while Bob was passing one of the Loftus Candy Shops Mary Carlisle should do something she had never done before—when she suddenly stopped right in the middle of wrapping up a box of

candy for a patron and gave Bob one long, dreamy look of admiration?

Her gaze remained fixed as Bob receded from view until the rather peeved voice of her not so romantic customer brought her back to such dull things as earth and candy. Now this was very unusual behavior for Mary. Ordinarily she was a very matter-of-fact young woman who took her position very seriously. She was not given to mooning. All efforts of the local beau brummels to be treated on other than a strict cash and carry basis were of no avail, and the general opinion, shared by them, pictured Mary as ending her days looking very much like the motherly old spinster who adorned the Loftus candy boxes.

The days and weeks flew by quickly for Bob Mahoney and with them went that feeling of newness that is the bane of all rookies. He no longer saw his reflection mirrored in the windows on his beat. His gaze went past his image and saw what was inside. It was then that he saw Mary. It was then, too, that young Dan Cupid selected a golden tipped shaft and with his usual unerring aim sent it quivering into Bob Mahoney's heart.

When Bob had completed his probationary period, he bought a ring for Mary; but, being a prudent young man, he decided to defer plans for their wedding until after he'd rounded out his first year as a policeman. They were an ideal pair of young lovers and, since

such was the case, they had their quota of the usual lovers' quarrels. Silly, childish affairs they were, but they served as fire to strengthen and temper the bonds of love and affection. They also served to give Bob an insight to a part of Mary's sensitive makeup. He discovered that while Mary was not easily offended, yet, she was slow to reconciliation when she believed herself hurt. In fact, it generally took a whole week before she was willing to "kiss and make up." It is upon this quirk in Mary's character that our story hinges.

One night during the week preceding Christmas they quarreled. Bob tried hard to soothe Mary's injured feelings because they had planned spending Christmas Day together at his aunt's house—and Christmas dinner without Mary would be a dull, lifeless affair. He strove desperately to get back into the good graces of his fiery young light of love. He was appealing, contrite and apologetic in turn, but all his efforts served only as added fuel to the fire that was consuming Mary just then. She would have none of him and she was very emphatic in telling him so.

"I never want to speak to you again," she told him and she slammed the door by way of emphasis.

Well, there was nothing for Bob to do but go home. He was pretty sore at himself—he could not blame Mary. He knew he was responsible and that he had given Mary good cause for offense. As he tossed in bed in a futile attempt at sleep, the thought of spending Christmas Day—their first Christmas Day together—seemed now remote—if not indeed altogether beyond the realms of possibility since Christmas was now only three days away. From past experience Bob knew the holiday would be over and gone before Mary would feel in a forgiving mood. Why, she might even hold out until New Year! Well, it served him right. He had it coming to him. He was thoroughly disgusted with himself.

After a restless night he got down to the precinct next morning. The events of the previous evening did not make him any too well dispositioned. When the station-house "wit" made a crack about how convenient it was to have a girl friend in a candy store at Xmas time, Bob was forced to use all of his old will power to refrain from making a physical retort. Why, even the Fates were conspiring against him. His post assignment for that day covered the candy store where Mary worked.

Out in the street the Christmas spirit was everywhere in evidence, and as Bob patrolled his post, he had to nimbly sidestep many a heavily laden housewife, whose vision as she trudged along was obstructed by Xmas packages. He passed Mary's store twice but always looked the other way. No use looking in. He had seen that cold, haughty stare on Mary's face before and he did not like it. Along about noon time Bob had his lunch and being so fortified he thought to walk past the candy store again. He felt he could stand the worst now, so he decided to brave that icy stare.

Meanwhile Mary had been very busy. In fact, at the moment when Bob was making up his mind to brave her anger she was waiting upon some customers. Business was very good and when two more men entered, Mary wished the boss had given her an extra girl to help out during the holiday rush.

It occurred to Mary that perhaps if she called up the boss the necessary help might be forthcoming.

But she never did make that call. A sneering, coarse voice saying "This is a stickup, sister!" rasped on her ears. Looking up, Mary saw that the two men held guns in their hands. One of them directed the customers into the back room, while the other ordered Mary to open the register and hand over the receipts.

It was just about then that Bob crossed the street and headed in the direction of the Loftus Candy Store. The gunman inside saw him and warned Mary to act "as if everything is O.K."

"Don't let him suspect anything or I'll kill you!" he hissed in her ear.

"Take that scared look off your pan and give the flatfoot a smile. I'll be watching every move you make and if you cross me you'll never live to tell it!"

Trembling, Mary proceeded to fix some candy boxes in the window. She raised her head as Bob passed and gave him a smile—a reproduction of the one that made him her prisoner the first time he saw it.

"Well I'll be—what's come over her?" Bob asked himself. "That's not the way Mary acts when she gets a mad on. That smile doesn't look right to me."

Even as these thoughts flashed through his brain his quick eye had detected a car with the motor running at the curb. Behind the wheel sat the look-out. Another flash of his eye revealed the thug in the store. He began to see the light. Bob had to act fast and coolly.

The street was filled with shoppers and he dare not hazard a gun fight. He summoned all his power of self-control and appeared to act unconcerned. He waved his hand to Mary and walked on a few steps. Then, looking across to the opposite side of the street he called out loudly, "Hello, George—I want to see you!" to an imaginary acquaintance.

He wheeled around as he spoke and crossed the street diagonally, dropping his right hand carelessly into his overcoat pocket. His path took him within a foot or two of the look-out at the wheel. His face was a mask as he passed him and continued on out of his line of vision. Then Bob whirled around, gun in hand, and before the startled hoodlum realized what was happening Patrolman Mahoney's gun was pressed to his head.

"Keep your hands on the steering wheel!" commanded Bob.

Opening the door with his left hand he forced the look-out to back out of the car, at the same time shutting off the motor. Keeping his prisoner in front of him our hero entered the Loftus Candy Shop. The robber in the store dropped his gun and put his hands up. Mary motioned towards the back room. With the two gunmen now in front of him Bob entered the rear portion of the store where he found the third man so intent on searching his hapless victims that he was blissfully unaware of their presence.

Upon the command "Stick 'em up!" from Mahoney he spun around, firing as he turned. Bob fired simultaneously, killing the bandit. The shot intended for Bob found its mark in the look-out's arm. A telephone call by Mary brought assistance in a hurry and conspicuous among the new arrivals was Captain Ryan.

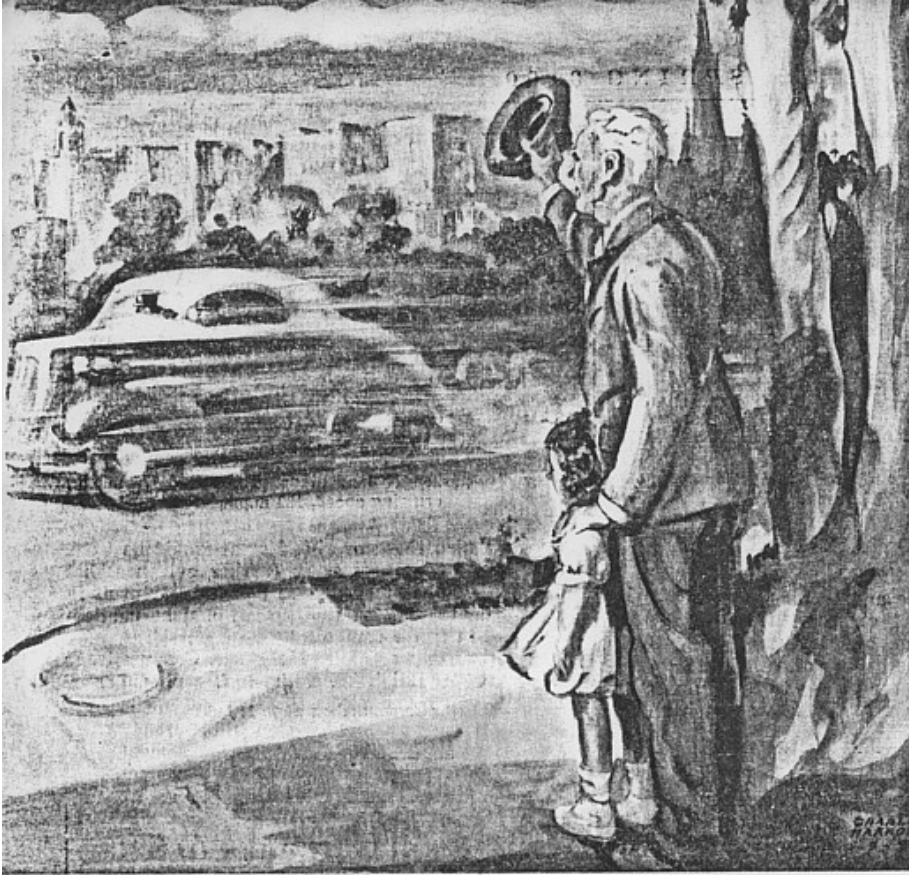
"You've done a nice piece of work, young fellow," commented the superior, "and I'm going to see that you get Departmental Recognition."

That made Bob happy, but not nearly so happy as the knowledge that Mary and himself would have their Christmas dinner together after all.

Spring 5100

August, 1939





"God speed you, Boys!"

PRIZE SHORT STORY



By
Patrolman
Joseph P. Sherman
18th Precinct

Drama via the Air Waves

GRANDPA JONES puffed on his short, well used briar pipe as he basked in the gentle warmth of a late April sunshine. At intervals this peaceful pastime resulted in his head being well nigh wholly enveloped in a halo of white blue smoke, and was responsible for the shimmering, bubble-like drops of saliva that poised on the tip of his stubby chin preparatory to being inevitably cascaded on to his vest.

Intermittently he removed the ancient briar from his nicotine-stained teeth and peered with paternal solicitude over the brass rims of antiquated spectacles at his four-year-old granddaughter, Patsy, who was going through the gyrations of some nursery game nearby. She was the apple of the septuagenarian's eye. His love and affection for her bordered on veneration.

Satisfied that all was well, he returned the pipe to his wrinkled mouth and in a moment was again obscured in a haze of smoke and lost in fanciful meditation.

The portentous wail of an oncoming radio car roused him from his reverie and galvanized him to action. With deft movements that belied his seventy years, he snatched his granddaughter from her play and gathered her into his protecting arms as the white-topped police car screamed by. Like a celestial body from outer space, it was gone in an instant.

Grandpa Jones gently returned Patsy to terra firma. With a pugnacious set to his chin and a hooked fist shaking in bellicose resentment he hurled a tirade of imprecation at the disappearing car. He was thus beligerently engaged when Clem Miller, his faithful friend and crony, came into view.

"What's eating you now, Grandpa?" queried Clem.

"Why, the dad-gasted, hair-brained—Oh, hello, Clem!"

"Seems to me you're all het up about something, Grandpa."

"Het up is no word for it at all, Clem. It's an outrage—a darn, downright disgrace the way those young whippersnappers go tearing around the public thoroughfares in those confounded kiddie cars. They're a menace to public safety. Along with risking their own reckless necks, they make our streets a veritable no man's land. I tell you, Clem, 'tain't safe to leave the sidewalk no more. And what's it all for? It don't do any good. All they do is scare them hoodlums away. A few minutes are never that important. Why, the way those fool young cops drive you would think a minute was something precious."

Grandpa Jones paused to catch his breath and Clem availed himself of the opportunity thus presented to venture hopefully: "Sometimes, Grandpa, a minute

may be the difference between life and death. You should know that, since Patsy's father is a radio cop. I'm sure he has told you of many experiences where the element of time was of vital importance."

"My son-in-law, Bill Kelly, tells me nothing," replied Grandpa somewhat testily. "He knows how I feel about this business." This was true, because Bill Kelly was long ago forced to admit his inability to cope with his father-in-law's garrulous loquacity.

"But," added Grandpa with a note of pride, "Patsy's father is not one to go careening around the streets like those darn maniacs who just went by. He's a cool, level-headed lad and the people in the precinct where he works have nothing to fear when he's driving. Like myself he's a great believer in the motto—the more haste, the less speed."

"Maybe so; maybe so," said Clem, "but there are times when all mottos and rules go out the window, and I still say those speeding radio cars justify their haste more often than not."

A series of short, quick sneezes coming from the direction of the little girl, Patsy, terminated further discussion along this direction.

"Sounds like the little one might be catching a cold," observed Clem.

"Darn this Spring weather," vehemently responded the cantankerous old man. "It's as treacherous as a bag of copperheads. Come, Patsy darling, we better be going home. So long, Clem!"

The vernal sun hanging low over the Palisades across the broad expanse of the majestic Hudson at Spuyten Duyvil cast ominous shadows on the ground as the old man led Patsy to a cheerful little house in the upper reaches of Manhattan. They arrived there just in time to meet Patsy's father, Bill Kelly, on the way to his downtown station-house. Bill picked up his little daughter, caressed her fondly and carried her into the living room where he left her midway between a giant teddy bear and a life-size baby doll. On the way out he handed Grandpa a cigar, smilingly commenting that it would give the "stove" a rest. Grandpa growled, "Thanks, son," as Bill strode out the gate.

A few hours later, Bill and his recorder, Pete Walsh, were weaving in and out of downtown traffic in car 216.

"Looks like a routine tour, Pete."

"I suppose so," replied the other, gloomily. "Nothing ever happens down here any more. When I put in my bid for assignment to the radio car I thought I would get some excitement, but now this inactivity is killing me. If it weren't for you, you big mugg, I'd go back on foot again!"

After Officer Kelly had left Patsy among her toys, her mother, about to wash her for supper, noticed that the little girl was cross and feverish. Anxiously she called to Grandpa.

The old man confirmed her suspicions. Patsy was sick. An hour later the fever hovered dangerously above 104. There was an unnatural sparkle in the youthful blue eyes and her little cheeks were strangely flushed.

Grandpa Jones rushed out and came back with Dr. Brent. He watched anxiously as the Doctor made his examination and diagnosis. When at last Dr. Brent stepped back from the little crib there was a grave expression on his face.

"How is she, Doctor?" asked Grandpa in a hoarse voice.

The physician drew him to one side. "She is a very sick little girl—dangerously sick! We must have serum and have it at once! Every second counts! The life of the child depends on the arrival of the serum within an hour!"

He was dialing a number on the phone as he spoke. When the Doctor had completed his call to the Department of Health there was a look of forlorn hopelessness on Grandpa's face.

"But, Doctor, the Department of Health—that's away downtown—they'll never make it away up here in an hour!"

"We can only hope for the best," said Dr. Brent. "Be assured that our Health and Police Departments will do everything humanly possible. The rest is in the hands of God!" Here the Doctor bowed before the will of the greatest of all Physicians.

"HEY, PETE, it's time to put the feed bag on," announced Ptl. Kelly as he took another hitch in his belt.

"Yeah," agreed Pete, "the back of my suspenders will soon be shaking hands with the front; I'm starved. Let's pull around to Dinty's place and wrap ourselves around a good steak."

Bill Kelly remained in the car while Pete attended to the wants of the inner man. The savory smells emanating from Dinty's kitchen whetted Bill's already keen appetite and he impatiently awaited the moment when he, too, would do justice to one of the succulent cuts for which Dinty was famous. His thoughts were abruptly shattered by the high-pitched monotone of the radio:

"Calling car 216 . . . Calling car 216 . . . Proceed to the office of the Department of Health . . . Pick up serum for immediate delivery . . . Matter of life and death . . . Calling car 216."

Bill was out of the car in a flash. "Come on, Pete, we gotta go!" he yelled to his partner.

"What's it now?" asked Pete as they piled into the car.

"Department of Health—pick up serum—" returned Bill as he skillfully shifted into speed. "Heavy on the siren, pal, and hold on to your hat!"

Pete received the precious package from a white-gowned technician. "1720 Riverhead Road," he shouted as he jumped into the moving car.

Bill's ruddy cheeks blanched and Pete saw a look of horror on his face.

"What's the matter, Bill?"

Kelly did not reply, but the car leaped forward under the impetus of pent-up power. It roared through tortuous streets, beside whose crazy pattern the fabrications of a tipsy spider would seem symmetrical. It hurtled along the elevated ribbon that fringes the Hudson and startled the opulent residents of Riverside Drive, finally coming to a screeching stop before the modest residence at 1720 Riverhead Road—Kelly's home—where his baby daughter lay hovering between life and death. Pete bounded inside and in a few minutes Dr. Brent had administered the life-saving serum.

Weeks later, with Patsy fully recovered, Grandpa stood watching another radio car screaming by. This time, with a wistful look in his eye and a grateful heart he murmured:

"God speed you, boys!"

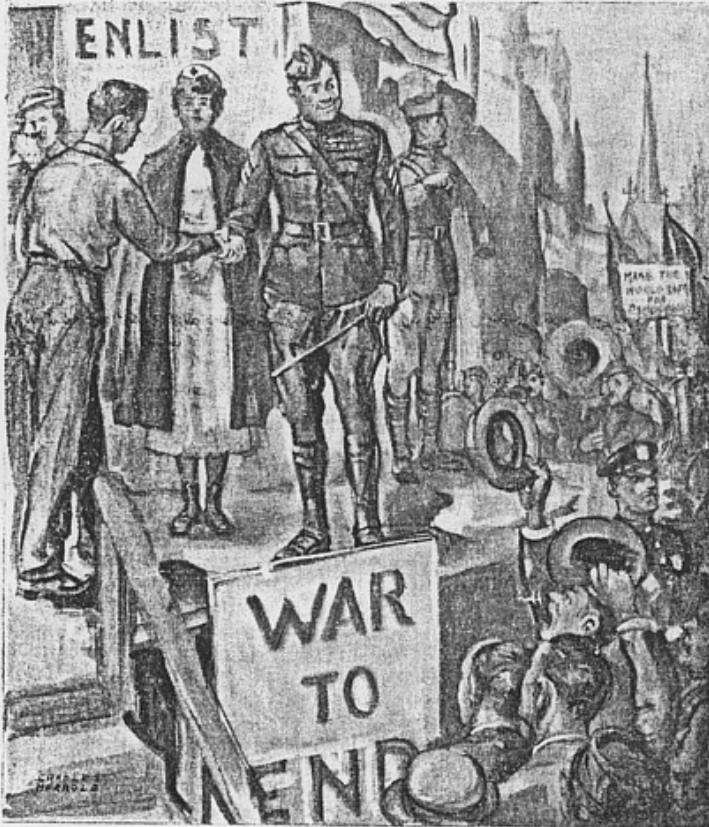
Spring 3100

November, 1939



Thanksgiving
Dinner
Guests

It Happened in '18



The bull-headed recruiting sergeant with the foghorn voice pumped the hand of the patriotic youth.

TO THE crashing strains of "Semper Fidelis" the khaki-clad outfit stepped briskly along. With flags waving and bayonets glistening in the reflected brightness of a noonday sun, they turned the corner and entered the square. There, they came to a halt before an improvised platform.

On the left of the hastily built structure hung a grotesque effigy of the imperial figure believed responsible by an inflamed populace for the sea of hate in which a supposedly civilized world at the moment floundered. The platform itself was festooned with flags and bunting. Banners exhorted all and sundry to buy Liberty Bonds. Placards depicted the depraved atrocities of the Boche. Others implored you to save Democracy. Still others invited you to a war to end all wars. A strange admixture of patriotism and war

hysteria permeated the atmosphere in every direction. Timid souls, who ordinarily would swoon at the sight of gore, now exhibit a brand of homicidal lust that would put to shame the vengeful war-dance of the savage Iroquois. How thin and fine-drawn is this veneer of civilization!

The music ceased abruptly as a portly figure, a man in his early fifties, mounted the speaker's platform. Indiscriminately stabbing a pudgy finger in the direction of the upturned faces, he belled hoarsely:

"YOU, and YOU, and YOU!"

A one-armed youth in the uniform of the Canadians next mounted the rostrum. Pointing to the stump, he yelled:

"I'll tell you where it is, it's on the banks of the

By

PATROLMAN

JOSEPH P. SHERMAN

18th Precinct



Prize Short Story

Marne and I'm going back again to carry our Flag straight through to Berlin!"

The crowd roared in a frenzy of approval. A future Gold Star Mother told them she had sent her two boys across and only regretted it could not have been three—her other son having gone down with the *Lusitania*. Thunderous applause from the audience as a blue-eyed lad of twenty impetuously clambered up the platform steps and announced that he would go in the absent one's stead. The bull-headed recruiting sergeant with the foghorn voice pumped the hand of the patriotic youth.

"WHO'S NEXT?" he roared. "DON'T BE A YELLOW-BELLIED SLACKER! JOIN NOW—THE DRAFT WILL GET YOU LATER, ANYWAY! STEP THIS WAY AND SIGN UP!"

A shrill whistle from the Major Domo and the band broke into the lilting tempo of *Tipperary*. The crowd joined in as one, the voices increasing in volume with each stanza. From walls and rooftops the mad symphony reverberated in an ever-increasing roar. Over by the sergeant's table a long line of hypnotized youth was being sucked into the vortex.

Officer Terry McShane, present at the meeting in line of duty, watched and listened. To think or believe that he was immune to this potent magic of Mars would indeed have been a fallacy. Not he, with the fiery blood of ancient Celtic chieftains racing through his veins. To his progenitors, war had been an occupation, and their prodigious deeds are recorded in the annals of practically every country under the sun. No one was surprised, then, when at the termination of his tour he blandly announced that he had enlisted. Next day he changed from the blue of the "Finest" to the olive drab of the A.E.F. Thus attired, he dropped into the station-house for a last goodbye.

Succeeding months were spent in a training-camp. The School of the Soldier and the Manual of Arms in due course were fully mastered. They taught him how to plunge a bayonet into the entrails of an adversary, emphasizing the importance of a quick twist after the cold steel had been driven home. He became expert at throwing grenades, grasping quickly the technique of gripping the pin between clenched teeth and pausing to count before releasing the vicious missile. In short, they made him a killer, a cold, unfeeling, robot-like killer. In a little while he would be "over there" killing men—strange men—men like himself also trained to kill, yet men with the same feelings, the same hopes and aspirations—men with whom he had no quarrel. Still, their duty was to kill and be killed. This was war. More than that—it was a war to end all wars.

An overcrowded transport convoyed by a flotilla of sleek, grey destroyers ferried them safely across the submarine-infested Atlantic. In the cool, half-dawn they anchored at Brest. A fear-stricken populace gaze at the big, bronzed men with mixed feelings of awe—and hope.

A few more weeks of intensive training at the base and then they were moving up. The distant, thunder-like rumble of guns becomes audible for the first time, a blood-chilling sensation—one which makes even the most heroic swallow hard. All about them is devastation—destruction. They were travelling through a land blighted, deserted. The inhabitants had long ago fled in terror before the approaching

hoofbeats of enemy *Riders of the Apocalypse*. Villages that formerly echoed to the sparkling laughter of youth and life were now ghostly heaps of twisted masonry over which hung a sepulchral pall of gloom. Trees, once green with leafy verdure, now gauntly stood like manifold gibbets, mute testimony to the scorching violence of the bombardment.

The following day they met them—that tragic line of bloody, mutilated wounded—a frozen expression of horror upon each intact face—grim evidence of the hell they'd been through. Closer now—they sink knee-deep in soggy mud. The rumble of guns is by this time a deafening roar! Vivid flashes of red and yellow sear the overcast sky! The pungent stench of burnt cordite stings nostrils and opens lachrymal ducts. Blinded, they push on, stumbling as they stagger over dead and near-dead. They're in the middle of it, now. This is the baptism!

Terry McShane hears the command "*Forward!*" Instinctively, he obeys. High-explosive shells scream madly in every direction! The incessant rat-tat-tat of machine guns sounds like a dozen trip-hammers in his brain! Men are falling around him like corn before the scythe! Then it came! A screeching whine—a blinding flash! The earth trembles in protest! A rain of rocks, clay—and pieces of human torso!

McShane wearily opened his eyes. He tried to move, then felt a strange empty numbness in the region of his legs. He looked down, saw they were gone. All that remained of those perfect limbs was a pair of bloody flesh and cloth stumps. The horrifying realization of his plight engulfed him. Every remaining nerve and fiber of his being clamored against the cruel injustice—the utter inhumanity of it all. Lying there, in the gaping shell hole, with reason quietly taking its leave, he felt he was going mad. Overhead, the missiles of death screamed and whined. A devilish rhapsody of destruction—unrelenting—never-ending. Star-shells, bursting in the low-hanging clouds cast fantastic shadows below. He fancied he saw in the eerie light the Angel of Doom—trumpeting the last recall.

A low, continuous moaning finally registered on his befuddled senses and with returning sanity he glimpsed a grey-uniformed figure—one of the hated enemy, he discerned, lying close by. The German tried to move—but the hands with which he had been so methodically trained to kill were gone. The remaining extremities, hideously scarlet, flapped penguin-like in a sickening arc.

Laboriously, McShane on elbows and forearms crawled until he was beside him. Through pain-contorted eyes they stared at each other, questioningly, but neither found that malevolent hate he had expected to see smoldering there.

Slowly Terry reached into his pocket and withdrew two cigarettes. Lighting them, he stuck one in between the Teuton's lips and the other in his own. Then, in a final gesture, he draped his arm around the other's neck.

Again their eyes met and a smile of unbelievable serenity spread over their wan countenances.

The rivulets of blood from their wounds blended in a crimson stream that trickled fantastically to the bottom of the shell-hole.

It was thus they discovered them later.

They had signed their armistice.

They had found—out there in No Man's Land—that peace which passes all understanding.

Spring 3100

April, 1940



"This One's On Me"

By
Patrolman
JOSEPH P. SHERMAN
18th Precinct



Prize Short Story



"Hop in, feller, this one's on me."

JOHN W. PAINE is a man of substance. Indeed, it is conceded by all who know him that he is the possessor of a more than ample chunk of this world's goods. There are those who say that the interest on John W.'s deposits alone accumulates faster than he can spend it. On the face of it, this might seem a very pardonable exaggeration. But if you happen to be familiar with John W.'s mode of life, you undoubtedly will agree that, instead of exaggeration, it is pretty close to factual accuracy. For in reality, this 20th century Plutus is very much of an eccentric. His peculiarities, numerous and varied, are at times an unhappy source of consternation and shame to his immediate kin.

One of his more deep-seated eccentricities is his habit of riding in the public transportation systems of the hoi-polloi. The subway, bus and taxi are equally well patronized by Paine, this despite the presence of three luxurious cars in his garage. Another of his unusual twists, which he carries to the extreme, is his desire to be dressed as conservatively and inconspicuously as is compatible with decency. It would seem that while he is a modern Midas, the necessity of always appearing as poor as the proverbial church-

house has become a virtual obsession. A strange goal toward which all his eccentricities are directed.

Late one night, John W. Paine and a crony hailed a cab in the forties. It was an old cab—a rattling, gasping hack—a sorry, decrepit relic of the golden days ante-dating the Wall St. crash. Crouching high above the steering-wheel was an equally old and decrepit driver. One of the old school. Burke was his name though among the thousands of Metropolitan cowboys he enjoyed the sobriquet of "Happy." Cab-driving was the only work he had ever known. He loved to dwell on the glories of the "profession" in the good old days and was frankly contemptuous of the "button-hole makers and their ilk" who were inexorably displacing the real cabby. Like all cab-drivers, he was loquacious in the extreme, though we must confess that Happy's brand of ear-bending was a rather pleasant ordeal. His range was wide and his opinions, if somewhat decided, were nevertheless interesting.

Paine directed him to an address in the east fifties. Happy threw the ancient jalopy into speed. The resultant roar drowned out all conversation while his passengers promptly conjured up visions of a buzz-saw cutting through knotty oak. After two blocks the roar

had dwindled down to a quick succession of muffled explosions, and Happy knew he was on his way.

"Do you think we'll make it, driver?" acidly queried Paine's companion.

"Listen, Mister, I'm no optimist, but if you say the word, Miami Beach is just as close as where you're going."

As he said this Happy's reflected face in the mirror was wreathed in a tantalizing grin. Seeing it, you no longer wondered why they called him "Happy." He possessed that rare faculty of turning back the most poisoned barb by the seemingly simple expedient of covering his face with a grin. Having turned it back, it invariably found its mark in the conscience of the thrower. There it wrought such havoc that the unlucky one was perforced to remain silent for a long time. "That'll take care of that wise guy," half-murmured Happy behind that devastating grin.

Reaching their destination, Happy brought the ancient cab to a trembling stop—a feat that brought forth a series of discordant screeches. John W.'s friend got out and disappeared through a door of iron-grill work.

"Drop me off at Fifth Avenue," directed Paine.

"Another short one," reflected Happy, but he grinned again and was on his way. Business had been so rotten of late that he had learned to be grateful for even the crumbs. If one only got enough of them, reading the clock would not be such a discouraging task. But, like the long runs, the quick jobs, too, were becoming fewer and fewer. Burke figured it must have been years since he'd clocked ten bucks. Working fourteen hours a day, his average take was a little in excess of operating costs. 'Twas all very, very disheartening. Many a time he felt the urge to quit the racket, but, somehow, he couldn't bring himself to do so. It seemed to be in his blood. He liked the feeling of being his own master and the sense of independence that went along with it. He never could fancy himself tied down to a regular job like other people. So, tough times and all, he nevertheless clung tenaciously to his hack.

Stopping at Fifth Avenue, his fare got out. Happy eyed him hopefully as Paine fished the required amount from what seemed to be a meager collection of dimes and nickels. Almost carefully he handed the fare over. Then, very deliberately he went through the few remaining coins. After a moment's decision he came up with a dime, which he dropped into Happy's grease-stained hand. The latter grinned his thanks as his passenger strode away. Hopping from behind the wheel, he made the usual cursory inspection of the rear compartment. Satisfied, he returned to his seat and was about to turn around and head downtown when he saw his recent fare standing at a bus-stop.

Happy's watch said 1.35 A.M. No more busses would run on the avenue until six. Funny how very few people knew that. Well, there was no good in tipping off the guy because experience had taught Happy that such information from a cabby was neither appreciated nor believed. People figured you were just drumming up some business.

But this fellow was different. He'd just ridden in Burke's cab, so maybe he'd better tell him. After all, he'd given him a dime tip. It wasn't much, but, still, maybe the guy couldn't afford any more. That was it. It all came back to him now. Why did he get out of the cab and want to take a bus? Sure, the poor gink

was broke. And just the same he'd forked over the dime. Gosh—maybe it was the only one he had outside of the bus-fare. Hell, a guy that acted like that must be aces. Well, Happy was not wanting in appreciation—for a right guy like that.

Pulling up alongside John W. Paine he was out of the cab in a flash. "The last bus is gone, Mr. ———; no more till morning." Then, taking him by the arm, "Hop in, feller, this one's on me."

Paine protested, but Happy was talking so fast his efforts went unheeded.

"That's O.K., pal, I was often broke myself."

"But," still protested Paine, "I'm not——"

"Aw, that's no disgrace; the best of people are broke today. Why, I know a guy on the W.P.A. who used to own a yacht. Get in, Mr., and forget it—I'll waste the gas, anyway." For such sheer persuasion-powered blarney John W. had no defense—and he capitulated.

During the balance of the ride, through the medium of a few cleverly-posed questions, Happy's life became an open book to Paine. It was a story of a losing up-hill fight against tremendous odds. What with the big companies all featuring brand-new cabs on the street every year, what chance did he have with his load of junk. People were fussy today. They only rode in the best. Many a time he had pulled up to a prospective fare only to be greeted by a deliberately contemptuous once-over, while a lug driving a sleek, new, streamlined cab swung in and grabbed the job.

"Get a new cab?" Sure, it would help plenty. *But what was he going to use for money on the notes?* He was lucky to make living expenses. No, a new cab was out. He wasn't lucky enough to win a sweepstake prize and there was no Santa Claus. "I hope I didn't weep too much on your shoulder," grinned Burke as he dropped his rider off.

"I'd like to have your name and address," said Paine. "Want to send you your fare."

"I told you this ride was on me—well, alright, if it makes you feel better, sure, here it is—write it down."

A week later Mrs. Burke handed Happy two letters which had come in the morning mail. One envelope bore the inscription "*De Luxe Cab Mfg. Co.*"

"Just another ad.—tear it up," Mrs. Burke promptly opened it and read:

Dear Sir:

We have been advised by our sales dept. of your purchase of a new *De Luxe Cab*. Will you please call and see the undersigned re arrangements for prompt delivery.

Sincerely yours,

Opening the other letter Happy found a Bill of Sale and a card on which was written:

"This one's on me.—J.W.P."

Little Agnes was taken to a restaurant, and her mother told her to say grace before meals as usual. "But, Mummy," she asked in astonishment, "aren't we paying for this?"